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If you believe you are eligible to vote and encounter difficulty registering, please contact the Elections Division of the Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth:

Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Elections Division  
One Ashburton Place, Room 1705  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 727-2828 (voice)  
(800) 462-VOTE (in MA only)  
(617) 742-3238 (fax)  
election@sec.state.ma.us (e-mail)

If the Secretary of the Commonwealth is unable to help you, or to report a problem, contact:

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Voting Section, Rm. 7254 - NWB  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
(202) 307-2767 (voice)  
(800) 253-3931 (toll-free)  
(202) 307-3961 (fax)  
www.usdoj.gov/crt

*This pamphlet is provided for informational purposes only, as an aid to further inquiry. The laws in many states are revised frequently, and may have changed since this pamphlet was issued. It is your responsibility to determine whether you are lawfully eligible to vote, and criminal penalties can result from voting when ineligible or making false statements on a registration form.*

Issued December, 2000

U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division



# Restoring Your Right to Vote

## MASSACHUSETTS



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The right to vote is an important civil right in a democracy as well as a civic responsibility, and yet many persons who have been convicted of a crime do not know whether they are eligible to vote. For both federal and state elections, the right to vote is controlled by the law of the state in which you live. Some states restrict the right to vote for persons who have been convicted of a crime. This pamphlet is intended to help you determine whether you are eligible to vote in the state in which you live and, if so, what steps you must take to be permitted to vote.

### **What law governs whether my felony conviction limits my right to vote?**

The impact of a criminal conviction on the right to vote varies widely from state to state. Whether you can vote after being convicted of a crime is determined by the state in which you live, not the state in which you were convicted.

### **Can I vote while I'm incarcerated in Massachusetts?**

In November 2000, Massachusetts passed a voter referendum which amends the state constitution to limit the voting rights of incarcerated felons. As a result, if you are a resident of Massachusetts, you may not vote while incarcerated as a result of a felony conviction.

If you are a resident of another state who is temporarily incarcerated in Massachusetts, you may be able to vote by absentee ballot in your home state. You need to consult the law of your home state regarding both criminal convictions and absentee ballots to see if this is a possibility.

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### **I have been released from incarceration. How do I restore my right to vote?**

Your right to vote is restored upon release from incarceration. For information about how to register, or whether an outstanding term of probation or parole will impact your right to vote, please contact the Elections Division of the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office.

### **What if my conviction was for a federal crime or for a conviction in another state?**

For more information on the rules that apply if your conviction was for a federal crime or a crime committed in another state, please contact the Elections Division of the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office.

### **What happens if I move to another state?**

If you move to another state, your right to vote will be controlled by the laws of that state.

### **What are Massachusetts' other voter registration requirements?**

To vote in Massachusetts, you must be

- a citizen of the United States of America
- a resident of Massachusetts
- 18 years old on or before election day.

### **When do I need to register to vote?**

Registration is available year-round in Massachusetts. In order to vote you must be registered 20 days before all primaries and elections, and/or 10 days before a special town meeting.

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### **Where do I go to register?**

You may register to vote in Massachusetts:

- in person or by mail, by completing a mail-in registration form and delivering it to your city or town election office
- at any local election office in any city or town in the state
- at any registration event you encounter anywhere in the state of Massachusetts
- at all colleges, universities, high schools and vocational schools
- when applying for or renewing your driver's license at the Registry of Motor Vehicles
- when applying for service at a designated voter registration agency

Contact the elections office near you to find out which service agencies provide voter registration. If you do not receive any confirmation of your registration, please contact your local election office to verify your voting status.